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PROBABLE POLICIES OF GENERAL DE GAULLE IN NORTH AFRICA AND EUROPE

Abstract

As the assumption of almost unlimited powers by General de Gaulle in France now appears imminent, this report attempts to estimate what his probable policies will be in the spheres that most directly affect US interests: (1) Algeria and North Africa and (2) European integration and defense. In the absence of recent statements of policy, either public or private, by de Gaulle himself, this estimate must be based primarily on opinion and indirect reports. Although these sources of information clearly establish the broad lines of the General's views, they cast far less light on his chances for translating his views into policy. This report also attempts to estimate these chances, very tentatively, in the light of all the complex factors involved.

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De Gaulle's plans for Algeria and North Africa appear to be rather flexible. He is believed ready to grant immediate "internal independence" to Algeria and, then, (1) either tie her separately (or together with "Black Africa") to France in a close federation (with Morocco and Tunisia federated with France on a somewhat looser basis) or (2) establish a North African federation of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, linked to France in a manner that would permit French control of the federation's military and foreign policies. To realize this aim, de Gaulle is reported to have stated his willingness to negotiate with anyone, presumably including even the Moslem rebels (FLN). While not willing to grant outright independence to Algeria, he has indicated his willingness to consider eventual independence, and he has reportedly stated privately that all France's possessions should be completely independent

even the Sovs?

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within twenty years.

Taken at face value, these views indicate a more liberal policy for Algeria than that of any other French postwar government; and the belief is almost universal in France that de Gaulle is the only leader with the prestige and authority to put such a policy into effect. On closer examination, however, his plan would appear to be too liberal for the Algerian Europeans and not liberal enough for the Algerian Moslems. It is doubtful that de Gaulle would be able to coerce the very elements that have been instrumental in bringing him to power, and the Moslems are sure to be suspicious of de Gaulle's supporters, if not of the General himself. It must therefore be concluded that de Gaulle's chances of bringing about a quick and peaceful solution to the problems of North Africa are considerably less than is generally assumed; and the danger exists that his extremist supporters may use his good name to accomplish aims, such as the reconquest of Morocco and Tunisia, that de Gaulle never envisaged.

De Gaulle's hostility to European unity organizations and to NATO is well known. The most optimistic estimate possible is that he would take a "very tough" attitude toward these organizations. His strongly nationalistic concept of France as an independent power establishing equilibrium between the US and the USSR could, in the view of many French leaders, lead France to an "anti-European", neutralist policy. The fact that his government is likely to be a virtual dictatorship, strongly supported only by the extreme right and the military, will in itself further hamper cooperation with the other countries of Western Europe.

If the General should succeed in restoring peace and stability in North Africa quickly, as well as avoiding serious civil disturbances at home, France may settle down to becoming a more stable, though somewhat more difficult, partner in Europe. If, however, as is likely, his policy in North Africa is thwarted, the General's efforts to seek a "new way" out of France's sterile conflict with the Arab world may lead him on the path of "adventure", resulting in further confusion, and even chaos, in France.

Report

During the past few months and especially during the last two weeks, the likelihood has increased that General de Gaulle will assume power in

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France. If power is granted to him on his own terms, as now seems likely, it will be unlimited power and will last for a relatively long period.

The General's first and most urgent task would be to seek a solution to the problem of Algeria. He will also give considerable attention to the role of France in European defense and integration, as well as to France's relations with the US and the USSR. The circumstances under which he comes to power, as well as his choice of advisers, which at this point cannot be predicted with any accuracy, will condition to a considerable degree the attitudes that he takes on these matters. But, in view of the General's dominating and stubborn character, there is no reason to doubt that his own personal views would be decisive in any important decision that France would take under his leadership.

It is therefore of importance to consider what these views are. Unfortunately, this task is not easy, for de Gaulle himself has made very few public statements on political matters during the past several years and such statements as he has made, even his recent ones, have been so cryptic and vague as to be almost meaningless. Still, the General's views on the various questions in which the U.S. is most interested have become known to us in their broad lines not only through fairly authoritative comment in the French press but also through private conversations between representatives of the US Government and various aides, associates, and others in whom he has confided. Though it must be kept in mind that all indirect information is subject to distortion, if not outright inaccuracy, an analysis of the available information of this type shows a near unanimity of opinion as to the broad lines of the General's views, which strongly vouches for their authenticity.

There follows an analysis of these views on the subjects of greatest interest to the United States, as revealed in the available sources:

(1) Algeria and North Africa

De Gaulle has always insisted that he is the only man in whom the people of the French Union, especially those of North Africa and "Black Africa", have sufficient confidence to permit them to collaborate in working out a solution to the problems of French relations with these areas.

The General's opponents, concentrated heavily in the left-of-center parties, including the Popular Republicans (MRP) and the Radical Socialist Party, have sought to brand this attitude a myth, but with only limited success. A great majority of political leaders and influential editors, whether or not they favor de Gaulle's actually assuming power, have come to accept at least this premise, especially since it seems so obvious that the General has a better chance of imposing his solutions on the military than any other political leader. The present crisis, precipitated by the Sakiet bombing, has accelerated the trend toward accepting the idea

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of de Gaulle's indispensability in solving France's North African problems; and it may safely be assumed that, by now, even many of the left-wing rank and file must share deep down the prevailing opinion that de Gaulle is the only leader who commands sufficient respect, prestige, and authority to carry out (or impose) a new, and most likely liberal, policy toward the dependent areas, especially Algeria. This feeling is intensified by the corollary belief, perhaps even more widely shared, that the present republican "system" is incapable of solving the complex North African problem.

One aspect on which everyone agrees in discussing de Gaulle's probable North African policy is that it would be exclusively French. The General himself has made it abundantly clear in public declarations, as well as in private conversations, that he vigorously opposes any kind of foreign intervention in such matters, and, specifically, that he opposes such actions as the recent US-UK Good Offices Mission.

Other aspects of his policy are far less specific, however; but his supporters imply that his failure to reveal details of his plans is intentional, not because such details have not been worked out in the General's mind, they say, but because he is unwilling to provide ideas that would be helpful in any way to the politicians of the system that he so despises.

At a press conference on June 30, 1955 (the last such conference prior to that of May 19, 1958), de Gaulle lifted the veil on his North African plans slightly by asserting that there was no valid policy for North Africa other than "association", if these territories were not to "fall prey to misfortune outside of France". By "association", he said he meant the establishment of a federal link between "states", such as France, Morocco, and Tunisia, whereas territories that were not states, such as Algeria, should be integrated in a "community broader than France, with all political, economic, and administrative participation to be supplied by the Algerians themselves."

By September 1957, he was reliably reported in the press (Maurice Clavel, L'Express, Sept. 7, and Le Monde, Sept. 8-9) to have stated that, in seeking a solution to the Algerian and African problems, he would talk with everyone---"no one excluded" (presumably referring to the FLN). He went on to say that France liked "grand concessions from which she reaped everything" rather than "half-measures which were turned against her" and was prepared to give "the maximum" to the dependent peoples. Algeria, he said, would be "all the more united with France because she was more free". He hastened to add, however, that he did not mean to imply total independence, which he thought was a false issue, though some type of eventual independence (à terme) was perhaps possible, though not important "in a solid federation".

In March of 1958 at the beginning of the present crisis in French-North African relations, Jean Daniel, a repected reporter of the weekly

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liberal paper, L'Express, in a private conversation with a member of Mr. Murphy's staff, stated that de Gaulle had in mind granting immediate independence to Algeria and then establishing a federation of North Africa with France. He added his belief that de Gaulle would be the "Mendès-France for Algeria".

The General's own aide-de-camp, Baron Guichard, supplied more details in a conversation with the same US representative. He said that de Gaulle's conception was that of a federation between France and North Africa, as well as Black Africa. This would mean that Morocco and Tunisia would have to give up certain aspects of their sovereignty, whereas Algeria would have to be brought forward to a status relatively comparable to that of Morocco and Tunisia. He asserted that President Bourguiba of Tunisia and the King of Morocco had made it clear "several months earlier" that they would be willing to accept such a status of less than full independence, but he admitted that it was questionable whether they would still be willing to do so after the bombing of Sakiet.

In a conversation with the departing Italian Ambassador (reported to CAS by a usually reliable third person), presumably sometime in March, General de Gaulle put the same idea more succinctly. After remarking that there were two types of Frenchmen--"those who want to change nothing and those who want to abandon everything"--and that he stood between these two extremes, the General said that North Africa must be given immediate internal independence, but France must retain control of the Army and Foreign Affairs. He added that "in 20 years, all our possessions should be completely independent" and that France must have "a dynamic, long-range policy not only in North Africa but in all Moslem states from Egypt to Indonesia".

This general position of de Gaulle was corroborated, with some embellishments, by the General's close associate, Gaston Palewski, now French Ambassador to Italy, in a conversation with an Italian Foreign Office official in late April (reliably reported to CAS through a third person). Palewski said that de Gaulle's solution for the Algerian situation would be to form a "confederation" of France, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, "with Paris as its political and administrative center". He said French residents of Algeria would have double citizenship in such a confederation. This solution, according to Palewski, would give Algeria complete freedom and independence in domestic affairs, would guarantee the rights of the French minority in Algeria, and would make it possible for France to control Algeria's foreign policy.

However lacking in vital detail, all these accounts indicate that de Gaulle's solution for Algeria would be a liberal one. Since it would appear highly unlikely that such views could be a secret to the French extremists in Algeria, it is therefore difficult to understand why they are now clamoring for de Gaulle's leadership, while hotly opposing any liberal solution proposed by others. The most likely explanation is that de Gaulle's supporters have no common views on an Algerian solution

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and that each prefers to read into de Gaulle's vague remarks the particular policy that he espouses. As Maurice Duverger put it in a recent Le Monde article: "When Jacques Soustelle and François Mauriac hope that the General will solve the Algerian problem, they are not thinking of the same solution. Each party sees in de Gaulle the instrument which will permit his own policy to triumph.....Everyone imagines in his own way what the Sphinx is saying." Duverger adds that, if de Gaulle would repeat publicly what he has been saying in recent private conversations (presumably his liberal views), the Algerian policy pursued by France since 1956 would not be possible.

There is every reason to believe, therefore, that de Gaulle, while accepting the support of the Algerian European extremists, still has a fairly liberal solution for Algeria in mind; and the fact that he is reported to have disapproved of Jacques Soustelle's going to Algeria at this time indicates that his solution is not that of the latter. At any rate, the return to the old unworkable policy of "integration", currently being so enthusiastically espoused by Soustelle and the Algerian Committee of Public Safety, would hardly seem to be the first step toward the realization of the policy that de Gaulle has in mind.

The question that then arises is whether General de Gaulle, once he is in power, could reasonably be expected to impose his North African solution on the Algerian Europeans, the French Army in Algeria, and the North African Moslems themselves. There would seem to be little reason to believe that the Algerian "insurgents", once having forced their will on the government of France by literally choosing its leader, would easily bow to his wishes if they did not agree with their own. Already one warning has been expressed by a spokesman of the Algiers "junta", as reported in the Journal d'Alger (Algier's telegram No. 407, May 20, 1958), to the effect that, if de Gaulle's policies do not jibe with those of the Committee (which, however, the spokesman thought was improbable), the Committee would have to "reconsider the situation". If the extremists balk at de Gaulle's solution, the next question is whether the French military in Algeria, apparently so penetrated with the sentiments of the local European population, would be substantially more willing to carry out a liberal policy for Algeria under de Gaulle's orders than under the orders of the present government.

The third question is whether, if both the Algerian Europeans and their military supporters bowed to de Gaulle's solution of the Algerian problem, the Moslems of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia would be willing to go along. Certainly there is no reason to assume that the solution that de Gaulle envisages is liberal enough to satisfy the Moslem rebels (FLN); and Morocco and Tunisia, after all that has happened recently to shake their faith in France, would undoubtedly be most reluctant, even with the assurances of de Gaulle, to relinquish voluntarily any of the tenuous sovereignty that they have so painstakingly wrested from France in the past. With the whole Arab world opposed to anything short of independence for Algeria in a purely voluntary association with France

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and with the likelihood of an Algerian Government-in-exile being declared, there can be no reasonable doubt that the Moslems inside Algeria, even those now "fraternizing" with the French under considerable artificial stimulation, would very soon revert to their old sympathies with the FLN.

If thwarted in his plans by noncooperation from one or more of the interested parties, de Gaulle would then be faced with the choice of either resigning or of altering his plans to suit those of the Algerian Europeans and continuing the war against the FLN to the bitter end. There is, also, the possibility that the General's good name may be used by his unscrupulous supporters of the extreme right for aims that he himself never envisaged, for example, a reconquest of Tunisia and Morocco, triggered by incidents that the extremists themselves might provoke. As the editor of Le Monde phrased it in a recent editorial (May 1958): "Behind him, monarchist in tendency but respectful of democratic principles, would not others stretch the sails to all the winds of adventure".

Whatever the turn of events, it can safely be concluded that de Gaulle's task in trying to find a solution to the Algerian problem that will bring peace and security to the area will be very difficult. And his chances of ultimate success must be considered far less likely than his supporters, or even the general public, so easily assume.

(2) NATO and Europe

All observers agree that de Gaulle is hostile to the concept upon which the existing European organizations, including NATO, is built and that his views on France's role vis-à-vis the US and the USSR are at serious variance with the role she is presently playing. His almost mystical conception of France's destiny as a great and independent power does not permit his accepting any sacrifice of French national sovereignty within supranational European organizations; and his idea of a North Atlantic alliance against Soviet Russia, if it is to be maintained at all, appears to be that of an old-style military alliance between equal and independent powers with a minimum of coordinated action. The opposition of the General and of his strongest supporters to European organizations in the entire postwar period is a matter of public record; and the influential Le Monde reminded the world in a recent editorial (May 21) of de Gaulle's remarks of December 1954 to the effect that France had no means within NATO to act on its own and that the alliance should be revised from top to bottom.

With more direct regard to the US, the General's views are strongly tinged with resentment against the Americans for what he believes to be the dominating role played by the US in Europe, especially in NATO, and he appears to have accepted the widely-held French view that the US opposes French rule in Algeria and other overseas areas only because it wishes to supplant her there. He and his supporters are also resentful of the growing influence of West Germany in European councils and appear to believe that the West Germans, as the favorite partner of the US, will

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eventually dominate European organizations, as the US, to the Gaullist way of thinking, now dominates NATO.

It is clear that, although he is not particularly friendly to Soviet Russia, de Gaulle conceives France's role, as he always has, as that of strong independent power establishing equilibrium between the two great powers. To be strong, de Gaulle believes, France must first establish peace in its overseas areas and a stable government at home, thus enabling her to throw the entire weight of the French "commonwealth" into the world political scales. As noted in the previous section, he believes he is the only man who can bring this about. While it is being accomplished, it is difficult to predict whether de Gaulle would withdraw entirely from European organizations, including NATO, or whether France would remain as a rather passive and unwilling partner until such time as she could assert her full authority. In either case, the effect on Western Europe would be highly disruptive. Under the circumstances, de Gaulle's régime in France would almost of necessity be a virtual dictatorship, which in itself would greatly hamper cooperation with the other countries of Western Europe, in most of which the Socialists either play a leading role or exercise great influence.

It must be concluded, therefore, that France under de Gaulle's leadership would be, at the very least, a difficult partner. As a French Foreign Office spokesman put it privately, de Gaulle could be expected to take a "tough line" toward France's NATO partners. The fact that de Gaulle is likely to be brought to power by a combined military-nationalist action certainly increases the chances that this line will be tough. In the view of West Germany, as expressed by Foreign Minister Brentano in a conversation with the American Ambassador in Bonn several days ago, the assumption of power by General de Gaulle would be catastrophic for the future of Western European cooperation.

Within the last two weeks, Gaullist supporters, and at least one unofficial "emissary" from de Gaulle's headquarters, have attempted to reassure the American authorities in Paris as to the General's intentions, but much of their comment still gives little ground for optimism. On May 16, for example, the unofficial emissary, while insisting that de Gaulle would maintain full participation in and not disrupt NATO, added that the General believes France should be a "member of NATO" and not "employed by NATO" and that he deplored French concessions to NATO in exchange for American loans (which he believes to be the practice of France's parliamentary governments). The spokesman for de Gaulle denied that the General was anti-American or anti-German, but strongly stressed that he was pro-French and implied that he would be willing to sacrifice very little of French sovereignty for the sake of European unity. In fact, the source added that, though de Gaulle favored European unity, he was convinced that that unity, as presently constituted, inevitably meant an inferior position for France that she could not accept. Once again, the spokesman echoed a favorite Gaullist theme that France must be strong before it can play its full role in any European unity program.

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De Gaulle's hostility to European organizations and NATO is so clear that it is not necessary to document it in detail. However, it may be interesting to review briefly some of the opinions of other French leaders that have come to us in the last two or three months.

An article in the MRP party organ in early 1958 asserted that de Gaulle's coming to power would risk plunging the Atlantic Alliance and the European edifice into such a broad crisis that it would give the Soviet Union and the Communists unhoped-for chances.

Socialist leader Guy Mollet, in a private conversation in March 1958, expressed his conviction that de Gaulle would shift France to a neutralist and independent position, thereby undermining her memberhip in NATO and her participation in European unity programs. Mollet added that de Gaulle was certain to pursue a unilateral, neutralistic policy toward the USSR.

Moderate leader Antoine Pinay recently expressed views essentially the same as those of Mollet. He predicted a shift of French foreign policy under de Gaulle toward a neutralist, independent position for France, inevitably involving a mortal danger for NATO and accompanied on the internal scene by a political fusion of the French Socialists with the French Communists, resulting later in a Popular Front government.

French Socialist and noncommunist labor sources, queried in March, believed that de Gaulle was convinced that there was no immediate danger from the Soviets and no urgency about Western European defense within the framework of NATO. Therefore, they maintained, the General believed that it was possible to come to an agreement with the Soviets, that the American alliance, though acceptable, was not indispensable, and that the Americans needed France more than France needed the US. These sources were convinced that the General considered European unity and all related projects secondary to the need for a "national revolution" (not specifically political or economic) in France. They described his views as being in general, neutralist, nationalist, and anti-European. While believing that the nature of the conditions under which de Gaulle came to power would determine his attitude, they felt that, if he were brought to power by groups that take a nationalistic line on Algeria, he would be anti-American or, at least, neutralist.

In his own recent remarks to the Italian Ambassador (as referred to above), de Gaulle is reported to have said: "I am not against 'Europe' but against Europe as presently organized with its institutions, assemblies, and bureaucrats. In other words, I am against the Europe of Jean Monnet. If it were possible to have a type of personal union amongst governments as under sovereigns in the past, I would gladly support such a union." The General added that it was necessary to maintain an equilibrium between the US and the USSR. "The USSR", he said, "could help us become less dependent on the US". De Gaulle is reported to have made essentially the same statements to the president of Air France, adding, with regard to

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the theme of maintaining equilibrium between the US and the Soviet Union, the phrase: "by keeping what there is but removing offensive characteristics."

De Gaulle's aide-de-camp, in his private conversation with a US representative in March, gave a slightly more optimistic interpretation to the same attitudes. After conceding that de Gaulle was anti-American, the aide went on to say that the general would certainly not pull France out of NATO, though he would make it clear that NATO was secondary to the formation of a "strong federation" between France and North Africa, with which NATO policies would not be permitted to interfere. The aide added that de Gaulle had always been a European federalist but there would have to be a federation of all Western Europe and not the little union of the Six, which simply had the effect of cutting France off from North Africa. With regard to the General's attitude toward the Soviet Union, the aide asserted that his chief had learned a good deal since 1946 and that only the General's enemies and the Communists claimed he would make a separate deal with the USSR.

A number of French journalists have also sought, rather unconvincingly, to put a more optimistic light on the same views of de Gaulle. For example, Jean Daniel of L'Express, in the same interview referred to above (in March), told the US representative that he did not believe de Gaulle would pull France out of NATO, though he might change the pattern of the organization. He also believed that, though the General might try to reach a settlement with the Soviet Union, this could be done in agreement with the US.

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